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SUBJECT: Southern View on the New DPP Chairman

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

¶1. (U) Summary: The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) held its island wide Chairmanship election on January 15 in which former Secretary General of the Presidential Office Yu Shyi-kun was elected the new DPP Chairman. With record low turnouts in southern Taiwan, Yu won all the cities/counties except for Penghu County. End Summary.

Low Turnout

¶2. (SBU) During the Chairmanship election, central DPP headquarters prohibited their elected officials and local party offices from mobilizing voting Party members by encouraging or providing transportation to members to vote in this election. While the average turnout rate was only around 20 percent, in Kaohsiung City and County the turnout rate was an even lower 16 percent. Some Southern political observers attributed the low turnout to the disappointment of the Party's members to the DPP's enormous losses in the December "3 in 1 elections". However, some party workers believe that this Chairmanship election was the most democratic one they have experienced, as the members who did bother to cast their votes did so without any external encouragement or facilitation by the Party.

Expected Results

¶3. (SBU) Most southern DPP party officials stated that Yu's election was expected, due to his being a "known entity", with prestige earned from his previous positions and contributions to the Party. Of the other two candidates, Legislator Tsai Tong-jung (Trong Chai) was seen as too old and former Changhua County Magistrate Wong Chin-chu had just lost her re-election bid, which made people suspect that her past performance must be poor. On Yu's election to the Chair, one party official commented "Anyway, anyone is better than Acting Chairman Annette Lu because she always says things which shock people."

Cultivating Grassroots Support

¶4. (SBU) Tainan County Chairman Kuo Kuo-wen told AIT/K that he hopes Yu Shyi-kun, as the Party Chairman, will pay more attention to strengthening and expanding grassroots

support for the Party in the South by providing more financial assistance and manpower to the local-level party offices. He reiterated that future DPP development must be based on grassroots growth and mobilization. Without adequate financial resources at the local level, Kuo emphasized, the Party will be unable to provide decent constituent services or to respond properly to the needs of grassroots supporters. It was precisely the central party's lack of concern about resources that, Kuo insisted, caused the major DPP loss in the "3 in 1 election".

TSU's View

15. (SBU) Basically, the DPP will not change much under Chairman Yu Shyi-kun, said Huang Chao-chan, Taiwan Solidarity Union Party's (TSU) Taipei central office's Deputy Secretary General. Huang told AIT/K that Yu is very approachable, so that any future negotiations between the TSU and DPP to facilitate election cooperation will be less contentious. Huang pointed to the upcoming Kaohsiung mayoral election, in which the TSU is hoping only one green-camp candidate will run in order to preserve the city for the green-camp. The TSU clearly doesn't want to be seen as a "spoiler" in this election.

KMT's View

16. (SBU) An AIT/K KMT contact stated that the low turnout in the Chairmanship election may indicate fading enthusiasm for the DPP among its previous grassroots supporters. The KMT is waiting to see if some "deep-green" supporters shift their support to the TSU, causing a "split vote" effect in the upcoming Kaohsiung mayoral

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election. (Note: TSU's Kaohsiung legislator Lo Chi-ming has announced that he is interested in running in the Kaohsiung mayoral election, although TSU Deputy Secretary General Huang told AIT/K that he doubts Lo has any chance to win. To date, the DPP has two high-profile candidates expressing interest in the mayoral race, former Chairperson of Taiwan's Labor Council Chen Chu and Interior Minister Su Chia-chuan. End Note.)

17. (SBU) Comment. In DPP's heartland, Southern Taiwan, the DPP Chairmanship election generated surprisingly little interest and party member turn-out in the actual voting on January 15. Two factors clearly affected the turnout. One was general burnout from the intense campaigning and mobilization work that the Party experienced in the recent "3-in-1 elections". Second, Southern voters and Party members are apparently still disappointed over the series of corruption scandals that have affected the DPP administration. End comment.

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